

*Fruit Wastage—Containers*

In a statement the legion spokesman said: "Regardless of whether labour or management is the blockade, we intend to see that the veterans' homes get the material required. We are not taking sides in the dispute, but veterans' housing has our priority."

The dispatch continues:

The picket line was unmanned at the time.

The I.W.A. strike committee organized its pickets on learning of the legion's move, but reached the plant too late.

In common with other members who have spoken to-day I also am not going to take sides in this dispute, mainly for the reason I feel I am entirely unqualified, having no knowledge of the merits of the case. I have read that dispatch to suggest that the member for New Westminster (Mr. Reid) was correct when he said that it is essential that our labour laws be clarified. I would urge upon the government that they consult immediately with labour officials in the provinces to see if a labour code cannot be devised for the settlement of such disputes, so that we can have in this very important sphere of our life the rule of law.

So far as the situation affecting the fruit growers is concerned, I feel there is no necessity to add anything to what has already been said. There is one suggestion I would make. I am not speaking on behalf of the berry growers, but I am very much interested in whether a permit will be given for the export of these berries. Information has come to me that a certain number of barrels are available in the province of Ontario. I suggest that if the barrels are available the government subsidize their shipment to British Columbia in an effort to relieve the container shortage that is developing there. Those of us who come from the interior fruit growing part of British Columbia are told that even if the factories were to resume work to-morrow they would not be able to catch up with the box requirements this season, and that some damage is already being done. We hope the strike will be settled immediately; and I put forward this suggestion, that the government look into the question of shipping these containers out to British Columbia with a view to repairing the damage already being done through the shortage of crates, owing to the length of time that work in the factories has already been stopped.

Mr J. H. MATTHEWS (Kootenay East): As one of the members from British Columbia I would be derelict in my duty if I did not rise and support the appeal made by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank) in this fruit crisis. I want to support him in his appeal to the government that they

[Mr. Fulton.]

immediately put in a controller to take charge, because that would have an immediate effect upon the fruit crisis from which the province of British Columbia is suffering.

There are a number of fruit growers in my constituency in the Creston valley area, and while I am speaking here this afternoon I can picture the scene as it exists in British Columbia. The sun is shining brightly, and the pickers by the hundreds are out in the fields, picking the strawberries at this time. While they are picking, work is going on in the packing sheds. As fast as the berries are brought in they are prepared and taken to shipping points in the evening hours. But that is not all that is going on. While the picking and the packing are going on, men are working feverishly, putting together the containers into which this fruit is to be packed. They are not only working all through the day but, as I have seen them time and again, working all through the night hours by electric light preparing the containers for the packing of the fruit next day. These fruit containers come to the growers in knocked-down form, and the boxes and shooks have to be put together to be ready for the next day's packing. That is the picture when all is going well, when the shooks and boxes and containers and barrels and so on are all on the farmer's property.

But imagine what is going on in the minds of these fruit growers this afternoon. Nature has been exceedingly kind, and the harvest is there in all its fullness and beauty. There is, however, no peace in the mind of the grower. He knows that a matter of a few hours or a change in the weather conditions can mean the loss of that particular crop. So that he is wondering just what he is going to do, when he sees that the shed which is usually filled with box shooks and containers is empty, and he has nothing on hand with which he can pack his crop. This man is not a party in any shape or form to the strike which is now going on. He is the victim of it, and because he is the victim, and a very unwilling victim, we are appealing to-day. I for one would not like to say anything which would prejudice the case, because the matter is now being dealt with by the authorities in British Columbia. But I appeal to the government to put in a controller at once and to get these box mills opened and the boxes produced, so that the fruit growers of British Columbia can save their fruit crop. Then, when that has been done, time can be given if that is what the Minister of Labour wants. If he desires to give these people some time to cool off and look at the situation in full security, they will have ample opportunity to do so. But